

INTERACTION STRATEGIES IN DISTANCE LEARNING

These strategies were developed for instruction but can be easily adapted to other situations.

IN GENERAL

- Listen to interactions carefully. Build on comments. Ask follow-up questions.
- Use role-playing, debates, readings, to encourage interactions.
- Play games with teams at different sites
- Chain questions and answers.
- Allow participants to do presentations.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Present information in a chart or graph format. Leave several blocks of the chart blank and ask participants at different sites to “fill in the blanks.” Once the chart or graph is complete, ask participants to draw conclusions from the data.



EXAMPLE, NON-EXAMPLE

Give an example (visual or verbal) of a concept that you have been discussing and ask a participant at one site to provide another example. Then ask a participant at a different site to provide a non-example. Keep going from site to site, asking for examples and non-examples, until participants are out of ideas.

PRESS CONFERENCE

As a homework assignment, ask participants to prepare a list of three to five questions based on the reading.

Begin class with a “press conference” where participants ask you their questions. Take one question from one participant at each site, then cycle back through all the sites until you are ready to move on to the next segment of your lecture. This is a good way to review material at the end of the class. In this case, give participants five minutes to write down any questions they still have, then begin the press conference.



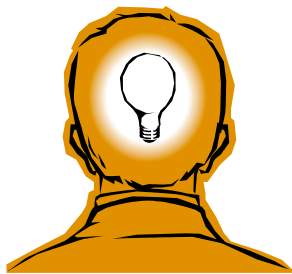
GROUP PRESS CONFERENCE

Follow the same techniques as the press conference above but divide participants into small groups and ask each group to go over the questions each individual has written up and answer as many questions as they can within the group. The group should then list any questions they still have, and prioritize them. Bring all the sites back together and begin the press conference. Take one question from one group at each site until every group has had a chance.



“HOT SEAT” OR “EXPERT” PRESS CONFERENCE

A variation on the above – one participant at each site sits in the “hot seat” (in front of the camera if they can) and responds to questions from the groups. When using this technique, you will need to take one question from each group, give the “expert” at each site a chance to respond, and then move on to the next group with its question.



PARTICIPATION BRAINSTORM

Begin the lecture by asking participants to brainstorm ideas on the topic you want to address in the lecture. If participants are not contributing to the brainstorm, ask for input from each site by name, or ask specific participants by name. Use the rest of the lecture to collaboratively classify, evaluate, or modify the ideas on the list.

STRUCTURED NOTE TAKING

Give participants a handout with a blank outline hierarchy or flowchart that matches the structure of the lecture. Have each participant fill in his handout as the lecture proceeds. Ask participants to turn in the handout at the end of class – this will give you some feedback on whether or not the participant understood the material.

VARIATION

Divide the participants into small groups at the end of the lecture and have them compare and discuss their handouts.



TEAM QUIZ

Divide your lecture into segments, based on the number of sites. Assign each site one segment of the lecture. At the end of the first segment, ask Team A (the first site) to design a quiz on the contents of that segment while the other teams (sites) study their notes. Team A then quizzes the other sites – they should ask one question of one participant at each site, then cycle back through the sites. The rules of the game:



- The team asking the questions gets to select the person who will answer the question. They must select a different person each time.
- If the designated member of a team responds correctly, the team gets two points. If she/he gets help from the rest of the team, the team gets one point.
- If the team is unable to answer, the question is asked of the next team.

After ten minutes (five minutes of preparation and five of quizzing), resume the lecture. At the end of the second segment, ask Team B (the second site) to design a quiz on the contents of the second segment of the lecture while the other teams (sites) study their notes. Team B then quizzes the other sites. And so on.



CRITERION-REFERENCED LECTURE

Distribute a handout with a series of questions arranged in sequence according to the objectives of your lecture. Lecture on the first set of objectives, then stop and give participants time to answer the questions that match those objectives. After everyone has had time to answer the questions, ask participants at different sites to share their answers. If participants are unable to answer a particular question, go back and review that material. Then move on to the next set of objectives and repeat the same process.

SISKEL AND EBERT TECHNIQUE

Stop your lecture at random intervals and ask a participant to summarize the content in her own words. Then ask all the other participants to “show their thumbs.” The participants point their thumbs up if they agree with the summary, thumbs down if they disagree, and thumbs sideways if they are uncertain. Begin with the participants that have their thumbs sideways. Have them ask questions of clarification to the summarizer, then “vote” again. Next, ask participants who have their thumbs down to explain why they disagree with the summary. Finally ask participants who have their thumbs up to explain why they agree with the summary.

BUZZ GROUPS

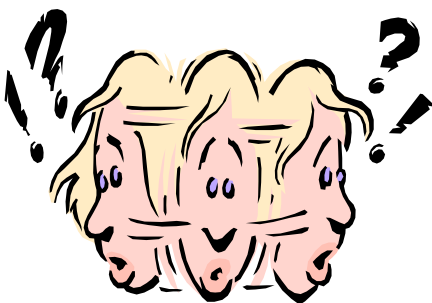
Often called the six-six method, buzz groups usually consist of six people who discuss a topic for six minutes off-the-air at their location. Everyone then comes together on-the-air for reporting back, group by group. For buzz groups to be successful, you should:

- Keep the task for the small group simple; develop one question, identify one disadvantage, etc.
- Have each group select someone to lead the discussion and a reporter to share the group’s decision with the larger group on-the-air.
- While off-the-air, display a slide or overhead with clear, simple instructions explaining the task and a timer that shows the remaining time. (The facilitator may write the task on a blackboard and monitor the time.)
- Ask the production staff to mute the sound from each location during the small group discussion time.



PRE- AND POST-ACTIVITIES

These activities are useful in getting discussion groups going at each of the sites.



Have participants at each site met before or after the class is on-the-air to discuss how the material might apply to their own situations or to answer an assigned question. Then begin the class by asking each site to report on their discussion.

VARIATION

Instead of evaluating participants individually, use a weekly question that is discussed and answered after class is off-the-air by small groups at each location. Have group members sign their names to the answer and fax it to you for evaluation before the next class. Minority opinions should be written and signed as well.

PARTICIPANT PUNDITS

If you have a seating chart, use it to call on individual participants. Ask a question and ask participant “A” at a site to respond. Then ask participants at different sites to “pundit” and react to or comment on participant “A’s” response.



Thanks to Carole Stern at the NC School of Science and Mathematics for sharing these strategies.

12 COMMANDMENTS FOR ITV Guy Bensusan’s Duo-Decalogue for ITV

1. Thou shalt relax. Let the electronic machinery work, and allow the Classroom Directors to do their jobs. Both function well without your supervision. YOU are there to assist learners with your subject.



2. Thou shalt not wear all black, all white, or the combination. Colors which are too stark, vibrant, or contrasting are hard to look at. Tight patterns and small pinstripes “swim and quiver,” distracting viewers. Button-down collars ALWAYS look wrinkled (thus saith my wife)!

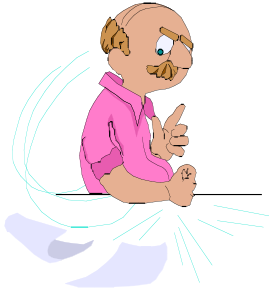
3. That shalt be prepared to tell, shalt also have thy visuals in mightest also consider of major course principles



ask, show, and recap. Thou order so as not to fumble. Thou permanent and colorful display behind thee.

4. Thou shalt consider providing hard copy. Distributing printed class materials to learners in advance allows them to grasp ideas and data without copying information from the TV monitor. Use Elmo (pad camera) spontaneously as well as pre-prepared outlines to awaken and nourish discussion.

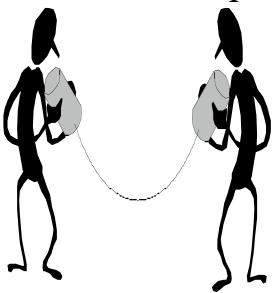
5. Thou shalt neither pound the rostrum nor thump thy breast, nor wear noisy jewelry! Caution learners not to dump backpacks on the desk, drum fingers, rattle papers, tap pencils, fondle microphones, or chat aloud. Sounds are magnified at other locations, creating annoyances and disrupting communications.



6. Thou shalt not move too much without giving some warning to the Classroom Director. (S)he cannot establish a tight camera shot on you if you may leap away, leaving the monitor empty. The looser the shot, the smaller the image – diminishing the message, the influence and the believability of the speaker.

7. Thou shalt remember that remote site learners are there too – and can only be involved through THEIR TV monitor. They cannot know what is happening where YOU are unless they are told or shown.

8. Thou shalt interact with remote site learners. When you look into the eye of the camera you are looking at THEM; if you talk while looking at their images on YOUR monitor, it becomes impersonal. Show them your eyeballs, not your hair or bald spot!



9. Thou shalt speak with your normal tone when talking to the remote site. The microphone levels have already been set and balanced, thus compensating for distance, wind, and elevation!

10. That shalt always keep in mind the direction, purpose and plan of the lesson. If you digress, remember to return, reiterate and reinforce. Whatever sights or sounds divert the attention of the participants also makes them lose focus.

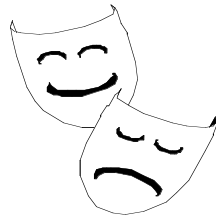
11. Thou shalt be a team player. Keep your Director advised. (S)he functions best when the game-plan is known in advance. You may always improvise – just tell the Director what you want to do.



12. Thou shalt keep the interaction going. This expensive teaching innovation allows opportunity for participants to express, explore, evaluate, and exchange ideas and their many classifications, perspectives, antecedents or underlying premises. Provocative interchange stimulates ongoing reflection and reconsideration. Participation fosters ownership and builds motivation.

P.S. Learning occurreth at the pace of the learner, not the teacher!

P.P.S. Thou shalt also grin and move along when thou goofeth up!



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